

comprising 5,725 acres, in the Taurakawa Survey District, and these are situate in country at present difficult of access.

*Miscellaneous Leases.*—The principal area disposed of during the year was 182 acres, comprising mostly sandhills lying between Mantahi and the sea-coast, which was let to the owner of adjoining lands, and five allotments in the Eltham-Opunake Railway Reserve were let to owners of adjoining lands on year-to-year tenancy, terminable by three months' notice in the event of the land being required for railway or road purposes. Six tenancies terminated during the year.

*Revenue.*—The gross revenue was £24,648 4s. 2d., being £830 over the estimated receipts, but about £5,105 less than the previous year's figures. The principal differences were in the cash, deferred-payment, and perpetual-lease conversions to freehold, the other tenures showing increased revenue this year, and these are the sources from which a true indication of the growth of the revenue can be obtained. The principal disbursements from land revenue were as follows: To Government Loans to Local Bodies Account, £4,489 5s. 2d.; "thirds" and "fourths," £3,544 12s. 11d.; North Island Main Trunk Railway Account, £1,087 2s.; total, £9,121 0s. 1d. In addition to these disbursements, a fourth of the gross revenue is paid to the New Plymouth Harbour Board by the Treasury under the provisions of "The New Plymouth Harbour Board Endowment Act, 1874."

*Arrears of Rent.*—There are twenty-two selectors less than the number that were in arrear on the 31st March, 1901, but the amount owing is about £100 more. On the 14th February, 1902, the number was 224, owing £1,836 13s. 9d., which has been reduced within six weeks to 106 selectors and £931 10s. 6d.

*Lands reserved and alienated under Acts.*—The principal reservations during the year were five sections for primary education, and portions of leases in perpetuity were resumed and surrendered for quarry and public hall reserves respectively, a section also being set aside for the use of the Department of Agriculture. I may mention that as soon as I took charge of this district I started the classification of the reserves with a view to their permanent gazetting, vesting, or other disposal as may be found on inquiry to be desirable. I trust to see this work brought to a satisfactory conclusion and illustrated by maps during the present year, in terms of the recent circular to that effect.

"*The Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Act, 1900.*"—In this district the number of applications for rebate of rent dealt with was 141, and the annual rebate amounted to £89 3s. 6d. The Commissioner of Crown Lands and the Receiver of Land Revenue exercised their discretion in each case, judging from the position of the land in relation to markets, the state of the access to the selection, and generally any other circumstances bearing upon the selection which would entitle the tenant to a rebate. The rates vary from 2 to 10 per cent., but in some instances the recipients evidently thought the discount not worth the necessity of paying up the rent within thirty-one days of due date. I am not at all sure that the method adopted is quite as good as a fixed rate for each class of tenure, and it might be a matter for consideration whether or not the procedure now in vogue might not be changed with mutual advantage to the selector and the Department alike. Up till now, however, I have simply continued the practice carried on by my predecessor.

*Selectors on the Books.*—Allowing for fifty-four selectors overstated in last year's return under the deferred-payment and perpetual-lease tenures, the correct number on the books at the close of last year was 1,001. The new selections total fifty, making 1,051. Deducting therefrom forty conversions to freehold, twenty-two surrenders and forfeitures, one expiry of endowment lease, and six terminations of miscellaneous leases (total sixty-nine), and 982 selectors are left on the books at the close of this year.

*Ranger's Inspections.*—The work done by Mr. Barron this year is about the same as in the previous one, there only being a difference of three selections, and the inspections on the whole show very favourable results, there being only twenty-four who have failed to comply with the conditions out of a total of 183. Of the fifty-four inspections made for ascertaining if the residential conditions were being complied with forty-five were found to be resident, and the nine who failed to comply have been satisfactorily accounted for by the Land Board. It was found also that thirty-one selectors had taken up their residence before they were actually required to do so.

*Probable Future of the Crown Lands Operations.*—As regards the lands already surveyed in the Ohura and adjacent blocks, comprising thirty-six allotments and totalling 17,626 acres, I anticipate a good deal of competition for them. These lands will be served by the Ohura and branch roads, being about nineteen miles distant from Ongarue on the North Island Main Trunk Railway-line *vid* Auckland, and seventy-six miles from the Stratford Railway-station on the Taranaki side. A good deal of the land will be suitable for dairying, and the whole, generally speaking, is well adapted for mixed occupation. Although a large amount of road-making is still necessary, the fact of the Ohura River being navigable for canoes will be found of great service to the settlers until the occupation roads are constructed.

In addition to the 59,677 acres already open for selection the following lands are ready for notification, as they have sufficient road-access at present: Pouatu Survey District—Twelve allotments; 5,389 acres; good mixed agricultural and pastoral country, some sections having good milling timber. Mimi Survey District—Three allotments; 697 acres; first-class bush land, suitable for dairying pursuits.

Also during the coming year, if funds are obtainable for roads, the following surveyed areas will be placed in the market: Waro, Upper Waitara, and Pouatu Survey Districts—Twenty-nine allotments; 24,760 acres; broken forest pastoral country; access by Moki and other roads. Upper Waitara Survey District—Eight allotments; 9,036 acres; broken forest pastoral country; access by Matau and other roads. Waro Survey District—Two allotments; 1,369 acres; broken forest pastoral country; access by Okau and Mangatoro Roads. Opaku and Omona Survey Districts—Seventeen allotments; 20,052 acres; broken forest pastoral country; access by Maben and other roads.